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SUBJECT: MUSLIM WORLD OUTREACH - PCC REQUEST FOR STRATEGIES

REF: SECSTATE 155954

11. Summary: Nigeria's large Muslim population is highly critical of US foreign policy and harbors many misconceptions and stereotypes about American society. Muslim media re-inforce these negative opinions. Our current Muslim outreach strategy is effective but needs vastly increased public and private funding. End Summary

12. Context. Nigeria has the largest Muslim population in Africa, including North Africa. In fact there are more Muslims in Nigeria than any single Arab country. Islam is deeply rooted in northern Nigeria among the ethnic Hausa/Fulani and in the south-west Nigeria among the ethnic Yoruba. All Muslim communities maintain mosques, koranic schools (Islamiyya) and Sharia courts. Fora for Muslim-Christian dialogue are active, but relations are tense and often erupt in communal violence spearheaded by unemployed Muslim youth. In foreign policy terms, most Nigerian Muslims disagree with U.S. Middle East policy and are against the war in Iraq. Their opinions about the U.S. are mixed. They appreciate U.S. support for Nigerian democracy and respect for US technology and institutions. However, they criticize permissiveness in American society, U.S. support for Israel, and what they perceive as lack of American appreciation for Muslims and the Islamic faith. Broadcast and print media in the north re-inforce these opinions.

13. Opportunities for Dialogue. There are numerous Muslim religious and civil society groups open to dialogue: Islamic studies departments at universities, the Arewa Forum in Kaduna, northern Nigerian think tanks, women's groups, youth organizations, the Muslim/Christian Dialogue organization in Kaduna, the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in Lagos, and Muslim secondary and koranic schools.

14. Effective Programs/Projects. The current outreach strategy utilizes Mission outreach, State Department exchange programs, USAID technical assistance, and DOD humanitarian assistance programs. Effective projects include:

- Mission-sponsored Iftars (dinners) to mark the end of Ramadan;
- International Visitor Grants (34 grants that include 50% Muslim participation);
- Mission-published Hausa-language magazine "Magama" that reaches 8,000 subscribers;
- Conferences like the recent Sharia conference sponsored by the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (US), the Islamic Studies Department of Ahmadu Bello University (NG), and the International Forum for Islamic Dialogue (UK) greatly enhance Mission outreach and dialogue;
- USAID's LEAP program to increase literacy and USAID technical assistance projects in Muslim communities;
- Peace Basketball Project for Muslim and Christian Youth in Kaduna and Jos modeled after programs for youth gangs in NYC (funded by USAID and Coca Cola);
- Television Co-Productions with the National Television Authority such as the one on Muslim life in America that receives prime-time broadcast during all Muslim holidays;
- Speeches to Muslim groups by US speakers and Mission staff;
- English teaching grants to high schools in Kano and Kaduna and special scholarships for needy students;
- Hausa-language fellows to teach at US colleges (3 grants);
- Supplies and construction of classrooms and clinics under DOD humanitarian assistance program;
- Youth exchange for high-school students from Kaduna and Sokoto under the International Partnerships for Learning initiative (IP4L).
- Girls's Scholarship Program for junior secondary students in 12 states, including 6 states in the north and 2 in the south-west;
- Establishment of American Corners in Ibadan and Jos.
- Educational Advising and college fairs on study in the US.
- Native Deen, Muslim hip-hop group from US.
- Workforce development programs funded by grants from Citizen Exchanges office.

15. Recommendations for future outreach. The current strategy is effective but needs to expand to more Muslim communities and needs increased funding from public and private sources in both the US and Nigeria. Mission's recommendations are as follows:

-- Provide 100 International Visitor grants for Nigeria to enable increased Muslim participation;
-- Fund academic exchanges in religion between US and Nigerian institutions;
-- Step-up educational advising at Muslim high schools;
-- Fund grants for US Muslim organizations, such as CSID, to work with Nigerian Muslim NGOs;
-- Expand publication and distribution of "Magama" magazine;
-- Increase funding for television co-productions with the Nigerian Television Authority and independent producers;
-- Establish American Corners in additional Muslim communities;
-- Fund workshops for Muslim journalists;
-- Expand Nigerian participation in the IP4L initiative to include educational reform and curriculum development;
-- Increase the number of Nigerian states (north and south-west) and Nigerian high-school students in the YES program;
-- Sponsor a tour of Muslim universities by the Native Deen musical group;
-- Re-establish Muslim/Christian Dialogue exchange project;
-- Expand Peace Basketball Project to additional Muslim communities;
-- Expand Girls's Scholarship program;
-- Increase cooperation between US Mission and other embassies (e.g., UK and Germany) on Muslim outreach.
-- Fund regional conferences for PD officers to discuss programming and personnel needs related to expanded Muslim outreach.

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